# 2018-2019 Serve Wisconsin AmeriCorps Planning Grant RFP Questions and Answers

Serve Wisconsin is collecting all questions that are received in writing to servewisconsin@wisconsin.gov regarding the AmeriCorps Planning Grant RFP. Redacted questions and answers are posted here for your reference.

All questions must be received in writing no later than midnight on May 11, 2018. This document will be updated periodically and posted on https://servewisconsin.wi.gov/Pages/Grants/PlanningGrantRFP.aspx

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## A. Questions Raised During the Current Competition

***A1. Can you confirm that we can apply for a second year of a planning grant?***

Section 1.2.1 of the Planning Grant RFP addresses your question in some regards. It says, "It is a policy of the Board that an organization can apply for and receive no more than two Formula funded Planning Grants over a period of two program years (maximum of one grant per year) to plan for AmeriCorps programming that would address the same need with the same program design." We are not aware of any restriction that would prevent you from being eligible for a second planning grant that would address the same need with the same program design.

***A2. Is there a cover page that is required with our application?***

No, please do not submit a cover page with your planning grant application that is due on May 15. When applications are created in eGrants later down the line a cover page will be created, but it does not concern your application that is due on May 15.

***A3. Is there an estimated date that grant decisions will be announced?***

The Corporation for National and Community Service says that they will award formula grants within 30 calendar days of Friday, June 29, 2018, if the submitted formula application is correct and compliant, reporting is up-to-date, and the state is free from compliance concerns.

***A4. Individuals in "covered positions" must have national, Wisconsin, and FBI background checks conducted. Does this include consultants?***

Generally, no, consultants are not required to receive a National Service Criminal History Check. For more information, please see questions 4.1, 4.2, and 4.15 of the NSCHC FAQ document.

***A5. The RFP provides a detailed outline of what to include in the initial proposal. The Application and Instructions and Attachments reflect additional details and requirements. One example is the latter document discusses (and illustrates) a logic model. Are there two proposal outlines, with the second being crafted if and when the board approves funding based on the initial proposal?***

Not all of the information included in the *Application Instructions and Attachments* is relevant to Planning Grant applicants at this time. The information included on pages 7-11 and most of the attachments that follow, will be used by applicants following Board approval in June. Applicants will need to enter their application into eGrants following Board approval and due to the nature of eGrants there are some additional pieces applicants will need to address.

***A6. In determining planned consultant costs, and looking at the posted sample budget narrative, if we list consultants by function, hours and total, can that capture more than one individual who performs the same general function? Can more than one person perform as a consultant in this capacity as long as all consultants' efforts combined do not exceed 410 (billed) hours, for example? Also, since the duties of the consultants may be varied, can/should we separate the development of partnerships and recruiting for each into separate line items?***

The *Application Instructions and Attachments* say:

> **F. Contractual and Consultant Services**
> Include costs for consultants related to the project's planning operations, except training or evaluation consultants, who will be listed in Sections G. and H., below. There is not a maximum daily rate.
>
> It is strongly encouraged that you work with consultants during the planning process to ensure that appropriate benchmarks are set and met, staff receives adequate training, and the organization is prepared to manage an AmeriCorps program. Consultants funded under this grant cannot be used to help write a Federal application.

Given those instructions, there is no requirement to list individual consultants separately. If you expect multiple consultants to be incorporated into one line item, you will want to specify that the line item is for consultants (plural).

Also, because this a budget, funded applicants are allotted a 10% variance to their budget without having to request a budget modification. So, if you were to overspend in the consultant line item, that would be fine, so long as you haven't overspent in other lines. If those variances add up to be 10% of your budget, you will need a budget modification. I mention that so that you know you will not be held exactly to your budgeted numbers.

***A7. When inserting evidence into our arguments of need and such, do we need to add footnotes or formal references providing full source details?***
There are no instructions or parameters that are set regarding cited resources in your grant application. It stands to reason that you will want you reviewers to be able to discern the resource you are using, yet there is no format you are being asked to follow.

***A8. If a staff person were to work pro bono on the project would that be considered private, nongovernmental match or grantee match?***
If an individual donates their time to the grant, and it is reported as match, it would be considered match, also referred to as the grantee's share. When further reporting happens during the program year, we will ask organizations to identify their actual match sources. At that time the grantee would identify the amount of match that is coming from the organization itself as well as other entities. The other entities could include individuals or other organizations if the program receives match from those entities.

## B. Questions Raised During Previous Competitions

***B1. I am trying to open an account in eGrants, but it is telling me in a separate document that an application ID will be given by the Board one I am approved. Do I need to open an eGrants account before applying for the grant?***
You should open an eGrants account, but as a Planning Grant Applicant, you will not be able to start an application in eGrants until you are approved by the Board at their June meeting.

***B2. Do I need to submit my application in eGrants right now?***

No, this will be the second step of the application process for Planning Grant applicants. You will only enter your application in eGrants if you are approved for funding by the Board at their June 8, 2017 meeting.

***B3. We are uncertain about how or where we would use AmeriCorps members. Are we a suitable candidate for a planning grant?***

The RFP states, "while the planning grant will help to determine specifics of the program, applicants should include as much information as possible about the potential AmeriCorps program." You seem to have already given some thought as a group as to how you may structure your program, but having a clear picture of how the program would operate does not necessarily mean it is more likely to be funded as a planning grant. We have had both ends of the spectrum funded as planning grants.

***B4. Since we haven't identified the specific activities AmeriCorps members would be engaged in, can we cite broader poverty-related needs since these are the areas we're considering, or is that too broad?***

Based on the RFP, poverty could be interpreted as a community need/problem that is prevalent and severe in communities where you intend to serve and as a problem for which a planning grant could be used to begin to address.

***B5. Does the planning grant year count as year one in the larger timeline of matching, or does that start over when applying for an AmeriCorps Program Grant?***

Match requirements are based on number of years a program (or project) is funded; therefore, your future AmeriCorps program match would reset at year one in the first year of funding.

***B6. Do you prefer proposals to be submitted in a separate email from the additional documents or is it best to send everything at once if possible?***

Either way is fine. The slightly preferable way would be to send all of the additional documents in the same email with the proposal.

***B8. I am working on a Planning Grant and feel confident in my ability to hire consultants who can assist me with the content of our project but I am wondering if you have a list of consultants who can be hired to specifically address and assist with AmeriCorps information. Or is it assumed that technical assistance comes from your office throughout the planning year?***

There is a level of technical assistance that will be provided to your organization during your planning grant year from Serve Wisconsin. This will be relatively limited in comparison to the level of assistance that can be provided by a consultant, however.

We have found it to be quite beneficial for planning grantees to hire consultants to execute parts of their planning work. The best list of consultants that work with AmeriCorps programs that we are aware of can be found here, http://www.statecommissions.org/assets/2018%20T-TA%20Directory%20final.pdf. I'd also add Amy Porter, and Lori Bakken to that list – two consultants who have worked with previous planning grants.

***B9. Can I see an example of a budget?***

There is an example of a budget in the Budget Template workbook. It is the second tab in the workbook.

## C. General Application Questions

***C1. Do I register for an individual or system account on SAM?***

You should register for an individual account. Follow the directions in the SAM User Guide: https://www.sam.gov/sam/SAM_Guide/SAM_User_Guide.htm

***C2. I work in a school and had to undergo a background check. Do I still need [National Service Criminal History Checks]?***

Yes, if your personnel expenses will be funded with grant funds (meaning, CNCS share OR Grantee share), you must complete the two or three point National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) prior to charging any time to the grant. You should include the costs of a FBI fingerprint check and State of Wisconsin background check in your budget. See more in the RFP.

***C3. If CNCS funds are used only by my organization but member agencies contribute matching funds to cover their local agency's involvement, do we need to budget for criminal background checks for all staff involved, or just our organization's?***

Individuals who are required to have multi-component National Service Criminal History Checks (NSCHC) run on them are those who work or serve in a covered position. A covered position is those who are funded, partially or wholly, by federal funds or shown as match (in-kind or cash) on the grant. So, for example, if you have organization staff who will be charging in-kind time to the grant, a NSCHC is required. If, however, that individuals will be involved in discussions and working on the program but not charging any of their time as federal or match, then a NSCHC is not required.

***C4. Where do I get an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement?***

If your organization has applied for and has been approved for an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, your financial office should have that documentation. We cannot tell you if you have one or not.

***C5. Do I use my name or my superintendent's name when applying?***

The authorized representative for your organization must be the one who submits any application to the Board.

***C6. What is an organizational chart?***

It is a chart that shows the staffing structure of your organization.

***C7. If we hire a consultant, do I need to factor in their mileage in the budget?***

This is entirely up to you.

***C8. Can someone review my proposal prior to submission?***

No one associated with the Board can review any part of the application or provide any feedback prior to submission. You will need to find someone you know or work with to complete a review.